From Expectations to Accomplishments Self-Study Guide

Module 1:

Writing Job Objectives

In this lesson, you learn about the importance of job objectives in NSPS. Goals include learning about the steps to take before writing job objectives, understanding the key questions that job objectives should answer, and learning how to distinguish between levels of performance. You also practice writing one of your own job objectives.

The following topics are covered:

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOB OBJECTIVES

Quick Tip

In most cases, the manager/supervisor acts as the rating official. In some cases, such as in a matrix organization, someone else may act as the rating official. Throughout this course, we use rating official, as it is more specific to the acts of rating performance.

Job objectives are the foundation of the performance management system. Job objectives summarize what you need to accomplish by the end of the performance period and how you need to accomplish it. At the beginning of the performance period, job objectives enable your rating official and you to develop a shared understanding of work priorities and goals. At the end of the performance period, your rating official writes your evaluation and recommends ratings by comparing your performance to the documented job objectives. The job objectives are used as a tool to manage, reward, and motivate your performance.

Job Objectives Definition

Definitions

✓ Job objectives are written expressions of the major work and specific results you are expected to accomplish during the performance year.

✓ Performance Indicators are standardized descriptions of levels of employee performance that are applied when rating the accomplishment of the employee's job objectives.

✓ Contributing Factors are attributes of job performance that describe the manner in which you achieve your job objectives.

Managing Performance

Quick Tip

> **Job objectives:**
>
> • **Set the expectations for the work you are to accomplish**
>
> • **Are used to manage your performance**
>
> • **Are compared to your performance by your manager/supervisor and the pay pool panel to determine your rating and payout**
>
> • **Should be related to your organization's goals and priorities**

Your rating official uses your job objectives to direct your work efforts toward helping the organization accomplish its goals for the year. Job objectives clarify your work priorities and are aligned with the Agency's mission and your organization's goals and priorities.

You can use your job objectives to manage your own performance, too. Regularly reviewing and referring to your job objectives throughout the year reminds you of those important organizational goals, verifies that your current work supports these goals, and validates that you are focusing your work efforts on the performance described in your job objectives.

In addition to work priorities, job objectives clarify your rating official's expectations for successful achievement of those priorities. Your job objectives should accurately reflect the work and the level of performance expected from you and should align with your Performance Indicators and Contributing Factors benchmark descriptors.

Performance Indicators define the level of performance used to measure, evaluate, and rate your achievement of your job objectives. Similarly, Contributing Factors benchmark descriptors define the expectations around the critical behaviors, known as Contributing Factors, that you are expected to exhibit when completing your job objective. Both Performance Indicators and Contributing Factors are standardized across the Department of Defense (DoD) by pay schedule and pay band. Together, the Performance Indicators, Contributing Factors benchmark descriptors, and job objectives clarify performance expectations for the work you do and help you and your rating official drive your performance. See page SG 1-11 of this guide for more information about Performance Indicators and page SG 1-17 for more information about Contributing Factors.

Rewarding Performance

You receive a performance payout based on how well you accomplished your job objectives. Since job objectives set the standard for what work you should accomplish, they become the measure for comparing accomplishments with expectations. If you choose to write a self-assessment (highly recommended), you compare your accomplishments against the expectations as described in the job objectives. Your rating official does the same when evaluating your performance. The pay pool panel confirms your rating official's recommendations by comparing your performance with your job objectives. In this way, how well you accomplished your job objectives influences your performance payout.

Motivating Performance

Job objectives allow you to see how your work supports your team and unit and how your work impacts the organization and Agency. Since your job objectives are written to align with your

Agency's mission and your organization's goals and priorities, the results of your performance can help you clearly understand the overall importance of your position and contributions.

Additional Information

If you would like more general information on job objectives, refer to these resources located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.

✓ *Job Objectives Fact Sheet*

✓ *Job Objectives Worksheet*

✓ *Use of Job Objectives Diagram*

CONTRUCTING JOB OBJECTIVES

Effective job objectives are clear, appropriate, and accurately reflect the work and performance expected of you. How do you know if your job objectives meet these criteria? Before you start writing, and while you are writing, keeping the following key questions in mind can help you to write effective job objectives:

- What do I need to achieve?

- For what purpose am I doing this job objective?

- How will achieving that job objective help my organization?

- By when must I complete the job objective?

- How will I know if I am successful?

Quick Tip

By participating in the development of your job objectives, you have the opportunity to directly and actively influence your responsibilities for the performance period.

The Contributing Factor(s) selected for the job objective should answer this question:

- What critical behaviors am I expected to exhibit?

Discuss your understanding of your responsibilities with your rating official. As you would before any meeting, think about your job and be prepared to answer any questions your rating official might ask you about your expectations.

Although it is ultimately your manager's responsibility to develop your job objectives, by participating in the development of your job objectives, you have the opportunity to directly and actively influence your responsibilities for the performance period. You and your rating official should develop a clear and shared understanding of your performance expectations. To help reach this shared understanding and to write effective job objectives, start by asking your rating official these questions:

- What should my work priorities be for this performance period?

- What are your expectations of my performance for this performance period?

- What mission or strategic goal statement should I to use to align with your goals?

- What are the major initiatives for our team/unit/organization?

- How can I make the greatest contribution during this performance period?

- Do you prefer I use a specific format or method to write my job objectives?

- By when would you like me to have completed a draft of my job objectives?

If you are a rating official, you need to have at least one job objective that directly addresses your role as a rating official under NSPS. This job objective requires accountability for the effective administration of NSPS, equal opportunity employment, and other Component-specific requirements. The mandatory supervisory job objective must cover these criteria:

- Communicating performance expectations and holding employees responsible for accomplishing them.

- Making meaningful distinctions among employees based on performance and contribution.

- Fostering and rewarding excellent performance.

- Addressing poor performance.

- Ensuring that employees are assigned a rating of record when implementing issuances require.

- Adhering to laws and regulations governing merit-systems principles, prohibited personnel practices, and equal employment opportunity.

- Ensuring continuing application of, and compliance with, equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws, regulations and policy.

The Leadership Contributing Factor must be selected for the mandatory supervisory job objective.

Additional Information

If you would like more information about job objectives and discussing job objectives with your rating official, refer to these resources located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.

✔ *Performance Planning Interview Questionnaire*

✔ *Cascading Goals Worksheet*

Preparing to Write Your Job Objectives

Job objectives clarify priorities so that what you do helps your organization achieve its goals. Therefore, before you identify the details of your job objective, you need to understand how your work fits into the big picture. Begin by making sure you clearly understand the goals and priorities for your team, unit, or organization. Next, ensure you are familiar with the standard protocols for work products and processes. Gather and identify relevant Standard Operating Policies/Procedures (SOPs), directives, and manuals. These items can provide information on quantity, quality, or timeframe measures that you should incorporate into your job objectives.

Once you gain this organization-wide perspective, consider how what you do fits into the organization's goals and priorities. Start by listing the work you do on a regular basis and grouping those tasks into larger categories of work. Grouping the work helps you focus on the results rather than the daily activities you do. Remember: job objectives are focused on the specific results. You can group your work in several ways. Two of the most popular are by the key functions you perform or by the skill set needed to complete the work.

Quick Tip

Before you begin writing your job objectives:

- **Look at your daily activities and group them into categories of work to help you identify results rather than activities.**

- **Consider grouping activities by key function or skill set.**

Grouping by Functions	Grouping by Skill Set
▪ Program management	▪ Research
▪ Stakeholder management	▪ Analyze
▪ Contract management	▪ Report

Examples of How to Group Work for a Program Analyst

As you cluster your work, also consider the percentage of time you spend working on each work category you defined. This can give you an indication of whether you are appropriately grouping your work. If you find that one of your work clusters only consumes 10 percent of your time, you may not have grouped the work into sufficiently large categories. You may be able to combine your tasks in a different way to balance your work categories more equally.

Looking at the percentage of time also gives you an indication of whether or not you need to weight your job objectives. Typically, job objectives are equally weighted; however, NSPS permits giving job objectives different weights to reflect the time or effort you spend accomplishing each. Unless your organization chooses to give a weight to each job objective, you want your job objectives to be roughly balanced. Therefore, if you have three job objectives, each should be, by default, about 33 percent of your time throughout the performance period. If you do weight your job objectives, the collective percentage weights of all job objectives must equal 100 percent, and no job objective may be weighted at less than 10 percent.

ACTIVITY 1: GROUPING YOUR WORK INTO CATEGORIES

Self-study Activity

Your job objectives need to reflect the specific results that you are expected to complete by the end of the performance period, rather than the individual tasks or activities that you do to achieve those results. Thinking first about the tasks you do, and then grouping them into related clusters or categories of work, can help you adjust your thinking from tasks to results. This activity, which contains two parts, can help you think about how to make that distinction. Since this activity is personalized to your work, no answer key is provided.

Part 1: In the first column below, make a complete list of all the duties, tasks, and activities you perform in your job, focusing on the things you do most often.

In the second column, group your related tasks and activities together to create three to five activity clusters. In cases when an item from the first column could fit into more than one cluster, choose only one.

In the third column, assign a brief name to each work cluster. These resulting names represent the major work categories for your job. The table below contains an simple example to help you start thinking about how to group your own work.

Duties, Tasks, and Activities	Work Clusters	Major Work Categories
Sample Activities: ▪ *Sort incoming mail by mail code* ▪ *Put mail in carts for delivery* ▪ *Sort outgoing mail by international versus domestic* ▪ *Deliver mail to post office*	*Sample Cluster 1:* ▪ *Sort incoming mail by mail code* ▪ *Put mail in carts for delivery* *Sample Cluster 2:* ▪ *Sort outgoing mail by international versus domestic* ▪ *Deliver mail to post office*	*Sample Work Category:* ▪ *Process mail*

Duties, Tasks, and Activities	Work Clusters	Major Work Categories

Part 2: Now that you have identified your major categories of work, think about what you are trying to achieve with each work category. In other words, at the end of the year, what will you have done or produced as a result of your activities? How will you show that you have successfully accomplished the work?

For example, if one of your work categories is "approving travel requests and ensuring they are in line with organizational travel policy," your result might be "all approved travel requests are processed timely and within guidelines published in the organizational travel policy." Write your major work categories in the first column and list your work accomplishments in the second column. You do not need to write complete sentences.

Major Work Categories	Work Accomplishments
Sample Work Category: Process mail	*Sample accomplishment: Sort all mail correctly and put in staff mailboxes by noon each day*

What are the three main functions of job objectives? What are the questions you should ask yourself and your rating official when deciding on your job objectives? If you need a reminder, review pages SG 1-3 to SG 1-5.

Knowledge Check

LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE

When writing your job objectives, referring to the Performance Indicators for your pay schedule and pay band and selecting Contributing Factors that are significant to the accomplishment of your job objective clarify performance expectations. This section focuses on Performance Indicators and Contributing Factors.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators play a key role in developing a shared understanding of performance expectations for your work by illustrating what the different levels of performance look like for each pay schedule and pay band. At the beginning of the performance period, Performance Indicators help to answer the question: What does level 3 performance look like? At the end of the performance period, they help answer the question: How well did you achieve this job objective?

Performance Indicators Definition

✓ Performance Indicators are general descriptions of levels of performance, standardized across DoD by pay schedule and pay band.

✓ Performance Indicators are used to establish, measure, evaluate, and rate your job objectives.

Definitions

Performance Indicators are important to consider when writing and evaluating job objectives because they objectively differentiate performance levels for various criteria at each pay schedule and pay band. These criteria include level of effort, complexity, achievement, quality of outcome, independence, level of skill and expertise, adherence to standards, and personal and professional conduct and performance. Since you should write job objectives for level 3 performance, you should review your Performance Indicators to be certain you are describing the work that you are expected to accomplish in words that are appropriate for your pay schedule and pay band. Although you should reference the Performance Indicators in writing your job objectives, be sure not to copy the wording directly from the Performance Indicators

Quick Tip

Write your job objectives for level 3 performance for your pay schedule and pay band.

The following questions may help you clarify your thinking about Performance Indicators and the expected performance levels:

- How much guidance or oversight can I expect to receive to help me achieve my outcomes?

- How much responsibility am I expected to take in proactively resolving issues?

- How independently am I expected to work?

- How much initiative am I expected to take in this position to accomplish these results?

Later in this guide, you learn about two models for writing job objectives: SMART and TEAM. In the SMART approach, the "Realistic/Relevant" element focuses on the appropriateness of the job objective to your pay schedule, pay band, position, and salary. The Performance Indicators give you a standard benchmark to determine whether or not the performance expectations are realistic.

In the TEAM approach, the "Evaluate" element focuses on determining the expectations against which your performance is evaluated. The Performance Indicators serve as both a standard to ensure consistency of expectations across DoD for employees of the same pay schedule and pay band and as benchmarks to help you address this element of your job objectives.

Additional Information

If you would like more information about Performance Indicators, refer to these resources located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.

✔ *Performance Indicators*

✔ *Critical Components of Performance Indicators*

✔ *Performance Indicators Fact Sheet*

Knowledge Check

What are Performance Indicators and how are they important to your job objectives and rating? If you need a reminder, review page SG 1-11.

ACTIVITY 2: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Indicators define performance at rating levels 3 and 5. This activity can help you understand the key criteria that distinguish performance at these levels.

Self-study Activity

Part 1: Below are the Performance Indicators for pay band 2 in the Technician/Support and Professional/Analytic pay schedules. Read the descriptions of performance for levels 3 and 5 for each pay schedule below. Circle the words in the level 5 column that differentiate performance from those in the level 3 column.

Technician/Support Pay Schedule (Non-supervisors)	
BAND 2	
Level 3	**Level 5** *(Additions at this level)*
▪ Effectively completed job objectives and work assignments, anticipating and overcoming obvious obstacles; ensured completed work is timely and adheres to applicable standards, policies, procedures, and guidelines.	▪ Achieved outcomes and results that are superior in quality, quantity, timeliness and/or impact to what would ordinarily be expected at this level.
▪ In achieving job objectives and work assignments, adhered to work/project schedules; organizes or prioritizes own tasks to complete assignments in an effective and efficient manner; adjusted own work priorities to achieve desired results.	▪ Persisted in overcoming obstacles and puts forth extra effort to accomplish difficult assignments.
▪ Demonstrated high standards of personal and professional conduct and performance.	▪ Contributed to organizational performance well beyond what is expected.

Professional/Analytic Pay Schedule (Non-supervisors)	
BAND 2	
Level 3	**Level 5** *(Additions at this level)*
▪ Effectively achieved the stated objective, anticipating and overcoming significant obstacles. Adapts established methods and procedures when needed. ▪ Results were technically sound, accurate, thorough, documented, and met applicable authorities, standards, policies, procedures and guidelines. ▪ Planned, organized prioritized, and scheduled own work activities to deliver the objective in a timely and effective manner, making adjustments to respond to changing situations and anticipating and overcoming difficult obstacles as necessary. ▪ Demonstrated high standards of personal and professional conduct and represented the organization or work unit effectively.	▪ Contributed results beyond what was expected; results were far superior in quality, quantity, and/or impact to the stated objective to what would be expected at this level. ▪ Exhibited the highest standards of professionalism.

Part 2: Now that you are more familiar with the wording of the Performance Indicators, practice incorporating them into job objectives. Read the sample job objectives below. Using the Performance Indicators for pay band 2 of the "Professional/Analytic" pay schedule in Part 1, find the appropriate words to add to each job objective so they reflect the Performance Indicators. Remember: write job objectives for level 3 performance.

1. **Administrative Assistant**

Upon receipt of routine requests, provide accurate responses within in the agreed-upon timeframes, using the appropriate format as identified in Format Manual 2007. This supports the organization's commitment to be responsive to customers and clients.

2. **Program Manager**

Submit draft strategy plan by 30 January including, at a minimum, sections on planning, message delivery, training, and sustainment. Upon approval by 28February, implement a Communication Strategy Plan by 1 April. This plan supports the organization's goal to improve client communication.

Answer Key for Activity 2: Performance Indicators

Self-study Activity Answer Key

Part 1: Did you correctly circle the words in the level 5 column that differentiate performance from that in the level 3 column? Check your circled words against the bolded words below.

Technician/Support Pay Schedule (Non-supervisors)	
BAND 2	
Level 3	**Level 5** *(Additions at this level)*
▪ Effectively completed job objectives and work assignments, anticipating and overcoming obvious obstacles; ensured completed work is timely and adheres to applicable standards, policies, procedures, and guidelines.	▪ Achieved outcomes and results that are **superior in quality, quantity, timeliness, and/or impact** to what would ordinarily be expected at this level.
▪ In achieving job objectives and work assignments, adhered to work/project schedules; organizes or prioritizes own tasks to complete assignments in an effective and efficient manner; adjusted own work priorities to achieve desired results.	▪ **Persisted in overcoming obstacles** and **puts forth extra effort** to accomplish **difficul**t assignments.
▪ Demonstrated high standards of personal and professional conduct and performance.	▪ Contributed to organizational performance **well beyond** what is expected.

Professional/Analytic Pay Schedule (Non-supervisors)	
BAND 2	
Level 3	**Level 5** *(Additions at this level)*
▪ Effectively achieved the stated objective, anticipating and overcoming significant obstacles. Adapts established methods and procedures when needed.	▪ Contributed results beyond what was expected; results were **far superior in quality, quantity, and/or impact** to the stated objective to what would be expected at this level.
▪ Results were technically sound, accurate, thorough, documented, and met applicable authorities, standards, policies, procedures and guidelines.	▪ Exhibited the **highest** standards of professionalism.
▪ Planned, organized prioritized, and scheduled own work activities to deliver the objective in a timely and effective manner, making adjustments to respond to changing situations and anticipating and overcoming difficult obstacles as necessary.	
▪ Demonstrated high standards of personal and professional conduct and represented the organization or work unit effectively.	

Part 2: Did you add the right words to the sample job objectives using the Performance Indicators for pay band 2 of the "Professional/Analytical" pay schedule in Part 1? Check your additions against those words in bold below.

1. **Administrative Assistant**

Upon receipt of routine requests, provide accurate, **thorough** responses; **organize scheduling independently** within in the agreed-upon timeframes, using the appropriate format as identified in Format Manual 2007. This supports the organization's commitment to be responsive to customers and clients.

2. **Program Manager**

Submit draft strategy plan by 30 January including, at a minimum, sections on planning, message delivery, training, and sustainment. Upon approval by 28February, **prioritize work activities to** implement a **sound**, **well-documented** Communication Strategy Plan by 1 April. This plan supports the organization's goal to improve client communication.

Contributing Factors

How you accomplish your job objectives is as important as what you accomplish. Contributing Factors identify the behaviors that are important to demonstrate while achieving your job objectives. Standardized by pay schedule and pay band across DoD, Contributing Factor benchmark descriptors describe attributes and behaviors at the "expected" and "enhanced" levels for each pay schedule and pay band.

Quick Tip

Just as your job objectives describe "what" you should accomplish with your work, Contributing Factors describe "how" you should accomplish your work.

Contributing Factors Definitions

Definitions

✔ Contributing Factors are attributes of job performance that describe the manner in which you achieve your job objectives.

✔ Contributing Factors describe "how" job objectives should be achieved in the behavior that should be demonstrated.

✔ Contributing Factor benchmark descriptors define "expected" and "enhanced" behavior for each pay schedule and pay band and are standardized across DoD.

While your rating official ultimately is responsible for establishing your job objectives and identifying the associated Contributing Factor(s), you should be engaged in this selection since you are held accountable for completing the job objectives in the manner described in the benchmark descriptors for your Contributing Factors.. The Contributing Factors selected for each job objective should be the most relevant, critical, and meaningful attributes for successful job objective accomplishment.

Quick Tip

Contributing Factors include:

• **Technical Proficiency**

• **Critical Thinking**

• **Cooperation and Teamwork**

• **Communication**

• **Customer Focus**

• **Resource Management**

• **Leadership**

There are seven Contributing Factors: Critical Thinking, Communication, Cooperation and Teamwork, Customer Focus, Leadership, Resource Management, and Technical Proficiency. As a general rule, your rating official selects one to three Contributing Factors for each job objective. However, some organizations recommend selecting no more than one. At a minimum, each job objective must have one Contributing Factor associated with it. For the manager's/supervisor's supervisory job objective, the Leadership Contributing Factor must be selected.

Select Contributing Factors based on whether they highlight the behaviors that are critical to the successful completion of the job objective, regardless of who is assigned the work. You should not select them based on your own strengths or development needs.

Remember that if more than one Contributing Factor is selected for a job objective, your rating official evaluates your demonstration of them "as a whole."

Additional Information

For more information about Contributing Factors, refer to these resources located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.
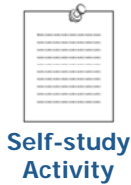
✓ *Contributing Factors Benchmark Descriptors*

✓ *Critical Components of Contributing Factors*

✓ *Contributing Factors Fact Sheet*

Knowledge Check

What do Contributing Factors represent? What are the seven Contributing Factors? If you need a reminder, review pages SG 1-17.

ACTIVITY 3: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Self-study Activity

Download the *Contributing Factors Benchmark Descriptors* reference sheet from the NSPS Connect learning web page to complete this activity.

Review the Contributing Factors benchmark descriptors for pay band 2 of the Professional/Analytic pay schedule. Read through the two sample job objectives below. Select the most appropriate Contributing Factor(s) for each job objective.

Job objective sample 1:

Within two months of hire, and consistently thereafter, process a minimum of 40 travel vouchers per duty day with at least 90 percent per voucher accuracy rate, asking more senior members for guidance when necessary to ensure payment to members within the Component's payout goal of 5 days of voucher turn-in. This aligns with the goal of improving accuracy and timeliness of reimbursements for those serving the Component.

Select one or more appropriate Contributing Factor(s) from the list below for this sample job objective.

☐ Communication
☐ Cooperation/Teamwork
☐ Critical Thinking
☐ Customer Focus
☐ Leadership
☐ Resource Management
☐ Technical Proficiency

Why did you make that choice? _____

_____

Job objective sample 2:

Support capability development decision-makers by completing the following actions with minimal guidance on assigned programs during this performance period to further the goal of effectively communicating our mission to external organizations:

- Using expert knowledge, provide guidance to executing organizations as to scope, timeframe, and key questions to be answered.

- Oversee progress of work being conducted by all contributing teams.

- Schedule, conduct, and document periodic reviews.

- Advise leadership on the status of effort, quality of work, and issues identified.

- Complete 80 percent of tasks within original timeframes.

☐ Communication
☐ Cooperation/Teamwork
☐ Critical Thinking
☐ Customer Focus
☐ Leadership
☐ Resource Management
☐ Technical Proficiency

Why did you make that choice? _____

_____

Answer Key for Activity 3: Contributing Factors

Self-study Activity Answer Key

Check your work below. Did you identify the same Contributing Factors? These answers are the most obvious, but you may have selected different or additional ones. Make sure you understand why the answers presented below are the best and that any additional answers you came up with make sense.

Job objective sample 1:

Suggested Answer: Critical Thinking

Why? Phrases from the benchmark descriptors include "collect, analyze, integrate necessary information/data," state decisions need to be "sound and timely," and "seeks supervisory assistance for unusual situations."

Key words in the job objective are in bold:

Within two months of hire, and consistently thereafter, process a **minimum of 40 travel vouchers** per duty day with at least **90 percent per voucher accuracy rate**, **asking** more senior members **for guidance when necessary** to ensure payment to members within the Air Force payout goal of **5 days** of voucher turn-in. This aligns with the goal of improving accuracy and timeliness of reimbursements for those serving the Air Force.

Job objective sample 2:

Suggested Answer: Cooperation and Teamwork

Why? Phrases from the descriptors include "working collaboratively and flexibly with others," "build effective partnerships across units," and "shares relevant knowledge and information with others."

Key words in the job objective are in bold:

Support capability development decision-makers by completing the following actions with minimal guidance on assigned programs during this performance period to further the goal of **effectively communicating our mission to external organizations**:

- Using expert knowledge, provide guidance to executing organizations as to scope, timeframe, and key questions to be answered.

- Oversee progress of work being conducted by **all contributing teams**.

- Schedule, conduct, and document periodic reviews.

- **Advise leadership** on the status of effort, quality of work, and **issues identified**.

- Complete 80 percent of tasks within original timeframes.

MODELS FOR WRITING JOB OBJECTIVES

When writing your job objectives, using a defined model can help you organize your thoughts and address the major questions that need to be answered. While there are many models available, two models that you might find helpful are the SMART approach and the TEAM approach.

Quick Tip

Using the SMART approach ensures job objectives are:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**ligned
- **R**ealistic/Relevant
- **T**imed

The SMART Approach

The SMART approach is one method you can use to help you create your job objectives. Each letter in the SMART acronym represents an element that should be reflected in the job objectives:

"S" stands for "Specific." Your job objectives should describe, in specific terms, what you expect to accomplish in the performance period. Job objectives should be specific to your work results, not to the activities or tasks employed to achieve the results.

"M" stands for "Measurable." The results of your work should be measurable, observable, and verifiable. Regulations, manuals, procedures, and guidelines provide useful measurements that you can incorporate into your job objectives. Job objective measurements may include quantity, quality, resources, or time involved, and should promote the desired outcome.

"A" stands for "Aligned." Your job objectives should link to the Agency's mission and your organization's goals and priorities. Job objectives should reflect a direct line of sight between your responsibilities and these goals.

"R" stands for "Realistic" or "Relevant." Your job objectives should be challenging yet attainable. Your job objectives should not reflect your strengths or developmental needs in certain skills and abilities but should relate directly to your position. The outcome of your job objectives must be within your control to accomplish, and the results should be appropriate to your responsibilities, pay band, and salary.

NSPS provides a clear way to determine if your job objectives are realistic for your pay schedule and pay band: Performance Indicators. Performance Indicators describe the level of complexity, degree of independence, quality of outcome, and expertise that your rating official considers when rating how well you accomplished your job objectives. Your job objectives should include words to address these Performance Indicators, but you should not directly copy text from the Performance Indicators to construct your job objectives. Write your job objectives to level 3 performance as described in the Performance Indicators for your pay schedule and pay band. See page SG-11 of this guide for more details about Performance Indicators.

"T" stands for "Timed." Job objectives should identify realistic and specific timeframes required to complete the associated work. These time frames may reflect a hard date (such as "by September 30"), or a relative timeframe (such as "within six months"). If the project associated with the job

objective is expected to extend longer than the performance period, use milestones or phase completions within the project to indentify timeframes within the performance period.

You can practice using the SMART approach in Activity 4.

Additional Information

If you would like more information about writing effective job objectives, refer to these resources located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.

✔ *Selecting Appropriate Measurements Tip Sheet*

✔ *Job Objectives Tip Sheet*

✔ *Job Objectives Worksheet*

✔ *Action Verbs Tip Sheet*

ACTIVITY 4: THE SMART APPROACH

Self-study Activity
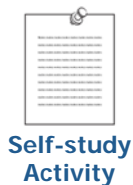
Read the three sample job objectives below. Mark the letters S, M, A, R, or T where you think the words used in the job objective are Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Timed. Can you find at least one word in each job objective for each letter? If not, note what is missing. You might find that one letter applies to several words in the job objectives or one word applies to more than one letter. There is extra space between the lines for you to mark these letters over the appropriate words.

1. **Administrative Assistant**

   Within two days of receipt of routine requests, provide accurate responses by referring to the specified manual within the agreed-upon timeframes, bringing issues to the supervisor for assistance with resolution and using the appropriate format as identified in Format Manual 2007. This work supports the organization's commitment to be responsive to customers and clients.

2. **IT Specialist**

   Develop three detailed project plans between October 1 and May 1 outlining the requirements, work to be done, estimated resources, and milestones/timelines for completion of the project. Upon project assignment, develop and manage own work priorities to provide a technically sound draft project plan to supervisor within 10 business days and provide a comprehensive project plan within 20 working days of plan approval. Upon request by supervisor, provide updates to project plan within 10 business days of request. This supports the division's goal to provide comprehensive support to every program in the department.

3. **Contract Specialist**

   Throughout the performance period, provide current and accurate status of all assigned contract actions on a weekly basis using appropriate and available reporting tools, resulting in the senior management team being informed of high-profile contract items. Submit 90 percent of weekly status reports by COB on Thursdays. Provide prompt and effective responses to ad hoc data calls and post-award contract action requests in a timeframe that is defined by the customer and balanced against other organizational priorities.

Answer Key for Activity 4: The SMART Approach
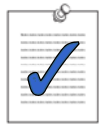
**Self-study
Activity
Answer Key**

Check your work below. Did you mark the words with an S, M, A, R, or T that were Specific, Measureable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Timed? Did you find at least one word in each job objective for each letter? If not, what was missing?

1. **Administrative Assistant**

Within two days of receipt [M] of routine requests, provide accurate responses [S] by referring to specified manual [M] within the agreed-upon timeframes [M, R], brining issues to the supervisor for assistance with resolution [R] and using the appropriate format as identified in Format Manual 2007 [M, R]. This supports the organization's commitment to be responsive to customers and clients [A].

Realistic? Yes. Relevant? Yes

2. **IT Specialist**

Develop three [M] detailed [R] project plans [S] from October 1 through May 1 [T] outlining the requirements, work to be done, estimated resources, and milestones/timelines for completion of the project [S]. Upon project assignment, develop and manage own work priorities [R] to provide a technically sound [R] draft project plan [S] to supervisor within 10 business days [M, R] and provide a comprehensive project plan [S] within 20 working days of plan approval [M, R]. Upon request by supervisor, provide updates to project plan [S] within 10 business days of request [M, R]. This supports the division's goal to provide comprehensive support to every program in the department [A].

Realistic? Yes. Relevant? Yes

3. **Contract Specialist**

Throughout the performance period [T], provide current and accurate [R] status of all assigned contract actions [S] on a weekly basis [M] using appropriate and available reporting tools [M, R], resulting in the senior management team being informed of high-profile contract items. Submit 90 percent [M] of weekly status reports by COB on Thursdays [M]. Provide prompt and effective [R] responses to ad hoc data calls and post-award contract action requests [S] in a timeframe that is defined by the customer and balanced against other organizational priorities [M, R].

Realistic? Yes. Relevant? Yes

Missing: Alignment.

The TEAM Approach

The TEAM approach is another method you can use to help you create your job objectives. Each letter in the TEAM acronym represents an element that should be reflected in the job objectives.

"T" stands for "Target." Job objectives describe a final product, service, or deliverable. By thinking about the target product, you think less about the actions or tasks and more about what those actions are intended to accomplish. The "Target" element clarifies what you expect to accomplish.

"E" stands for "Evaluation." Job objectives should specify the criteria against which your performance is evaluated. Your job objectives should reflect the requirements of your position, not your strengths or developmental needs. You should review the Performance Indicators and write your job objectives to the level 3 performance described therein. The "Evaluation" element reminds you to reference, but not copy, Performance Indicator expectations into your job objective.

"A" stands for "Alignment." Your job objectives should link to the Agency's mission and your organization's goals and priorities. Job objectives should reflect a direct line of sight between your responsibilities and these goals.

"M" stands for "Measurement." The results of your work should be measurable, observable, and verifiable. Regulations, manuals, procedures, and guidelines provide useful measurements that can be incorporated into your job objectives. Job objective measurements may include quantity, quality, resources, or time involved. Job objectives should also identify realistic and specific timeframes. Select your measurements carefully. Make sure to use the right measurement that truly reflects what is important for you to accomplish. Remember that you should measure what is most important for success. Avoid measuring quantity if quality is what matters most.

You can practice using the TEAM approach in Activity 5.

Quick Tip

Using the TEAM approach ensures your job objectives reference these elements:

- **T**arget

- **E**valuation

- **A**lignment

- **M**easurement

Quick Tip

Select your measurements carefully:

- **Make sure you choose the measurement that is important to what you want to accomplish.**

- **Percentages may be useful sometimes, but not always. If you do not have a way to track the percentage you are trying to achieve, you cannot document your success.**

- **If quality is more important than quantity, percentages may be measuring the wrong element.**

Additional Information

For more information about measurements, refer to the *Selecting Appropriate Measurements Tip Sheet* located on the NSPS Connect learning web page.

Knowledge Check

In the SMART and the TEAM approaches, under which category do you include references to the Performance Indicators? If you need a reminder, review pages SG 1-22 and SG 1-26.

ACTIVITY 5: THE TEAM APPROACH

Read the following three sample job objectives and their associated elements. In the table below each example, note the sentence or phrase that reflects the Target, Evaluation, Alignment, or Measurement for the job objective elements.

Self-study Activity

1. **Project Manager**

Implement Communication Strategy Plan by 30 September.

Strategy draft includessections on planning, message delivery, training, and sustainment.

Improve client communication in support of agency goal.

Submit draft strategy by 30 June.

Draft is technically sound and thoroughly documented.

Target	
Evaluation	
Alignment	
Measurement	

2. **Budget Analyst**

Schedule two draft presentations in anticipation of unforeseen changes and determine solutions for issues arising from presentations.

This supports the organization's goal to be fiscally prudent.

Financial Plan and supporting document must be complete, signed, and submitted no later that 15 September.

Develop FY Financial Plan for divisions in order to request funds from ODS.

Applicable guidance is outlined in the fiscal policy issued by OSN and agency comptroller.

Target	
Evaluation	
Alignment	
Measurement	

3. **Program Analyst**

Coordinate with other offices as needed.

This supports the agency's goal to provide exceptional service to internal customers.

Prepare accurate response.

In appropriate format, using guidelines established by directorate, within time frame given by the suspending office.

Analyze request for specific issues and recommend mitigation strategies.

Review appropriate statutes, DoD and agency directives, policies, and other guidance.

Incorporate updates and changes per feedback/coordination received.

Target	
Evaluation	
Alignment	
Measurement	

Answer Key for Activity 5: The TEAM Approach

Self-study Activity Answer Key

Check your work below. Did you note the correct job objective elements as Target, Evaluation, Alignment, or Measurement? If not, what was missing?

1. **Project Manager**

Implement Communication Strategy Plan by 30 September.

Strategy draft includes sections on planning, message delivery, training, and sustainment.

Improve client communication in support of agency goal.

Submit draft strategy by 30 June.

Draft is technically sound and thoroughly documented.

Target	Submit draft strategy. Implement Communication Strategy Plan.
Evaluation	Draft is technically sound and thoroughly documented. Includes sections on planning, message delivery, training, and sustainment.
Alignment	Improve client communication in support of agency goal.
Measurement	By June 30 By September 30

2. **Budget Analyst**

Schedule two draft presentations in anticipation of unforeseen changes and determine solutions for issues arising from presentations.

This supports the organization's goal to be fiscally prudent.

Financial Plan and supporting document must be complete, signed, and submitted no later than 15 September.

Develop FY Financial Plan for divisions in order to request funds from ODS.

Applicable guidance is outlined in the fiscal policy issued by OSN and agency comptroller.

Target	Develop FY Financial Plan for divisions in order to request funds from ODS.
Evaluation	Schedule two draft presentations in anticipation of unforeseen changes. Applicable guidance is outlined in the fiscal policy issued by OSN and agency comptroller. . . . and determine solutions for issues arising from presentations.
Alignment	This supports the organization's goal to be fiscally prudent.
Measurement	Financial Plan and supporting document must be complete, signed, and submitted no later than 15 September.

3. **Program Analyst**

Coordinate with other offices as needed.

This supports the agency's goal to provide exceptional service to internal customers.

Prepare accurate response.

In appropriate format, using guidelines established by directorate, within time frame given by the suspending office.

Analyze request for specific issues and recommend mitigation strategies.

Review appropriate statutes, DoD and agency directives, policies, and other guidance.

Incorporate updates and changes per feedback/coordination received.

Target	Prepare accurate response. Incorporate updates and changes per feedback/coordination received.
Evaluation	Analyze request for specific issues. Coordinate with other offices as needed. Recommend mitigation strategies.
Alignment	This supports the agency's goal to provide exceptional service to internal customers.
Measurement	Review appropriate statutes, DoD and Agency directives, policies, and other guidance. In appropriate format using guidelines established by directorate within time frame given by suspending office.

ACTIVITY 6: JOB OBJECTIVE PRACTICE

Now that you understand the job objectives creation process and are familiar with the important parts of job objectives, you can use what you learned to write a draft job objective. Choose either the SMART or TEAM model to help you. Since this activity is personal to you, there is no answer key provided for this activity.

Remember to begin by defining the "large buckets" of your work. As you write your job objectives, be clear about what results are expected of you. As you document your accomplishments throughout the performance period, document that you are progressing toward the results that are in your job objectives.

Using the above information and questions, write a draft of your job objective below using either the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Timed) or TEAM (Target, Evaluation, Alignment, Measurement) model.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Don't forget to select at least one Contributing Factor that is most appropriate for this job objective:

- ☐ Technical Proficiency
- ☐ Cooperation/Teamwork
- ☐ Customer Focus
- ☐ Leadership
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Resource Management

Why did you make that choice? _____

_____

ENVISIONING SUCCESS

As the last step in writing your job objectives, imagine that it is the end of the performance cycle and you have successfully completed your job objectives. Assume that you have decided to write a self-assessment to document what you have achieved. Write a self-assessment from the words you used in your job objectives, as if it were the end of the year and you performed at level 3. The future expectations you wrote need to match what you have achieved.

Writing an assessment at the beginning of the year can help you sharpen your job objectives. Your assessment is an excellent tool to verify the comprehensiveness of your job objectives at the beginning of the year. You might need to make your job objective more specific. If you start writing about a measurement in your assessment that you would use to describe your success at the end of cycle, consider including it in the job objective.

Writing a draft assessment at the start of the performance period gives you a clear understanding of your job objectives and what you plan to accomplish.

KEY POINTS FROM THIS LESSON

- Job objectives are written descriptions of the major work and specific results you are expected to accomplish during the performance year. Job objectives summarize what you need to accomplish by the end of the performance period and how you need to accomplish it. At the beginning of the performance period, job objectives enable your rating official and you to develop a shared understanding of work priorities and goals. At the end of the performance period, your rating official writes your evaluation and recommends a rating by comparing your performance to the documented job objectives.

- SMART and TEAM are two models to focus your thinking as you develop job objectives. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Timed, and TEAM stand for Target, Evaluation, Alignment, and Measurement. You should ensure that your job objectives contain all of the elements in the SMART or TEAM model.

- Performance Indicators are standardized descriptions of levels of performance that are applied when rating the accomplishment of job objectives. Performance Indicators are used to measure, evaluate, and rate job objectives and describe what is expected of employees in a specific pay schedule and pay band. Performance Indicators describe level 3 and level 5 performance for each pay schedule and pay band and are standardized across DoD. Your job objectives should be written to the level 3 performance.

- Contributing Factors describe "how" job objectives should be achieved and are attributes of job performance significant to the accomplishment of individual job objectives. Benchmark descriptors describe "expected" and "enhanced" behavior for each Contributing Factor, are specific to each pay schedule and pay band, and are standardized across DoD. The seven Contributing Factors are Critical Thinking, Cooperation and Teamwork, Communication, Customer Focus, Leadership Resource Management, and Technical Proficiency. Best practice is to select one or two Contributing Factors for each of your job objectives. Your

demonstration of "expected" or "enhanced" behavior may result in your rating official adjusting your job objective rating either up or down one point, or leaving the rating as is.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THIS LESSON

Additional Information

✔ *Action Verbs Tip Sheet*

✔ *Cascading Goals Worksheet*

✔ *Contributing Factors Benchmark Descriptors*

✔ *Contributing Factors Fact Sheet*

✔ *Critical Components of Contributing Factors*

✔ *Critical Components of Performance Indicators*

✔ *Job Objectives Fact Sheet*

✔ *Job Objectives Worksheet*

✔ *Performance Indicators*

✔ *Performance Indicators Fact Sheet*

✔ *Performance Planning Interview Questionnaire*

✔ *Selecting Appropriate Measurements Tip Sheet*

✔ *Use of Job Objectives Diagram*

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